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ABSTRACT

The "basic building blocks" for a discussion program concerned with the issues of racism and tensions among racial and ethnic groups are contained in this manual. It presents the core materials for five discussion sessions and general information on the study circle process: study circles--small-group, democratic, participant-driven discussions--provide a flexible tool for dialogue. Because the study circle philosophy encourages a participant's respectful listening to everyone's experiences and views, study circles are ideal for addressing an important and sensitive issue such as race relations. The first part of the manual offers a brief introduction to the issue of racism and the ways study circles can address it. It also provides core material for the discussion program, organizing it into five possible sessions. Following that are ideas for leading and organizing discussions on racism and race relations. Part Two presents ways to adapt the discussion materials presented in Part One to the needs of specific communities or organizations. The manual concludes with a selection of readings on racism and race relations, and an annotated bibliography. (Contains 32 references.) (TS)

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ED 395 246

"Can't we all just get along?"

—A Manual for Discussion Programs on Racism and Race Relations

2nd Edition

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Writers: Mark Niedergang and Martha L. McCoy
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Second Edition

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You are welcome to photocopy this publication, or you can order additional guides from SCRC for $5.00 each, with discounts for large orders. Also available is ***The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Racism and Race Relations.*** The Busy Citizen's booklet, designed as a participant handout for discussion programs based on this larger guide, consists mainly of Sessions A through E of ***Can't We All Just Get Along?*** It is in an easy-to-use 5 ½ X 8 ½ format, and can be purchased for $1.00 per copy, with discounts for large orders. A special supplement to our newsletter which provides further suggestions and resources for using this material can be obtained free of charge.

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Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the many community leaders who took the materials and suggestions of the first edition of ***Can't We All Just Get Along? A Manual for Discussion Programs on Racism and Race Relations*** and turned them into reality. They have learned valuable lessons about the challenges and rewards of organizing democratic discussions on race relations. We have attempted to incorporate those lessons into this second edition of ***Can't We All Just Get Along?***

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

A Manual for Discussion Programs on Racism and Race Relations

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FOREWORD

Racism and tensions among racial and ethnic groups are critical problems in our society. Many Americans care deeply about these problems and have a lot to say about them. Only as we share our experiences, ideas, and perspectives with each other will we develop effective solutions.

But dialogue not only helps us find solutions — it is, itself, part of the solution. The only way we will get along better is for people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds to talk openly and respectfully with each other. That kind of discussion gives people the opportunity to learn about diverse experiences and backgrounds, and leads to a greater understanding and appreciation of others' cultures and perceptions. Dialogue across racial and ethnic lines also provides a basis for working together on other problems.

This manual offers a means for you to engage the members of your community or organization in this dialogue. It provides the basic building blocks for a discussion program: core materials for five discussion sessions and general information on the study circle process.

Study circles—small-group, democratic, participant-driven discussions—provide a flexible tool for dialogue. Because the study circle philosophy encourages respectful listening to everyone's experiences and views, study circles are ideal for addressing an important and sensitive issue such as race relations.

Since this manual was first published in the summer of 1992, it has been used by many organizations across the US: schools, churches and synagogues, colleges and universities, civic groups, city and state agencies, and civil rights organizations. An especially powerful use of *Can't We All Just Get Along?* has come about when community-wide coalitions have called for widespread dialogue and then coordinated multiracial and multi-ethnic discussion groups. These community-wide programs have involved many citizens and have led to enduring multiracial and multi-ethnic networks for addressing a range of community problems.

Transforming race relations in this country will require the participation of many Americans in face-to-face, constructive discussions. Whether you organize discussions within your institution or in coalition with other groups, please tell us about your efforts. We want to know how you use this manual so that we can continue to document the growing network of communities and organizations around the United States that are fostering productive dialogue on race relations. We want to assist with your program and put you in touch with others who are organizing similar programs.

We wish you the best as you promote dialogue on one of the most critical issues of our time.

Study circles provide a flexible tool for dialogue.

PART ONE: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A DISCUSSION PROGRAM ON RACISM AND RACE RELATIONS

This part of the manual offers some building blocks for discussions on racism and race relations. First, there is a brief introduction to the issue and the ways study circles can help address it. Second, there is core material for the discussion program, consisting of five possible sessions. Following that are some ideas for leading and organizing discussions on racism and race relations. Part I concludes with general information about the study circle process.

Use the sessions just as they appear in Part I, or adapt them for your group using the suggestions in Part II.

The five sessions offer a variety of approaches for discussing racism and race relations. They are just a few of the ways racism and race relations can be addressed; depending on the number of sessions you are planning, you may use one, some, or all of these approaches for your program. Use the sessions just as they appear in Part I (you can simply photocopy and distribute them to participants), or adapt them using the suggestions in Part II.

The core material is designed to encourage two ways of thinking: consideration of an issue from a variety of perspectives; and an examination of the assumptions and attitudes that underlie long-held views. If you augment or build on these materials, it will be useful to keep these purposes in mind.

Group members should receive materials at least several days in advance of the discussion. "The Role of the Participant" (p. 24) will help them understand what is expected of them. The leader of a study circle need not be an expert on the issue, but must have a clear understanding of the study circle process. Leaders should refer to "Leading Discussions on Racism and Race Relations" (p. 17) and "Leading a Study Circle" (p. 22).

An Urgent Need for Dialogue on Race Relations in America

New Evidence of Racial Divisions

In his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois said, "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." While racism exists in many other nations, it has been called "America's national obsession." Almost a century after DuBois's book, Andrew Hacker began his 1992 book, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, with this line: "Every one of us could write a book about race. The text is already imprinted in our minds...."

Racism has played a key role in our history as a nation, clashing with our founding principles of equality and justice. The wars against Native American tribes, the enslavement of Africans, and discrimination against immigrants were all based on the belief that some peoples were inferior.

In the second half of this century, we began to see some progress in race relations. The civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s gave many Americans hope that justice and greater racial harmony were possible. Attitudes and situations that were once the norm—racist statements by political officials, separate and inferior public institutions for blacks, the refusal to serve blacks in restaurants or to accommodate them in hotels—began to change as the result of heroic individual and collective struggles.

Increasingly, leaders are calling on Americans to hold a thoughtful dialogue on race relations.

Now, however, it seems that progress on race relations has stalled, just at the time when so many other social problems loom larger than ever. Our society faces tough issues: poverty, violence, the need for education reform, a changing economy, and declining inner cities. Our ability to address these problems is complicated by racial isolation, racism, and prejudice. Further, racial and ethnic divisions often parallel the economic divisions in our society.

Adding to the sense that we are at a critical juncture are the rapid changes in the makeup of our society. A large wave of Latino and Asian immigration began in the 1980s. In some states, whites may be a minority within a generation or two. By the year 2000, one in three Americans will be a person of color. This diversity has brought new energy and talent, but some Americans have felt threatened by it.

Though the United States has prided itself on embracing a wide variety of cultures, there has always been disagreement about whether there is one all-encompassing "American culture" and what that means. The current debate over "cultural diversity" reflects these tensions over how we define ourselves. Many Americans from ethnic groups that are usually in the numerical minority believe that their cultures and experiences are not valued as part of the American experience. Other Americans have fears and misgivings about redefining our national tradition. At a time of increased ethnic tensions around the world, still others have questioned

whether the "American experiment" of a multi-ethnic society can work.

The fears of worsening racial and ethnic tensions in the US came to a head in Los Angeles in the spring of 1992. The acquittal of four white police officers who were videotaped as they beat Rodney King, and the violence and civil unrest that followed, astonished and outraged many Americans. The acquittal also led many people to wonder just how much progress we have made on race relations.

Since that time, tensions have continued to erupt into race-related violence in other communities around the country. Many people are beginning to realize that we must come to terms with race relations—and that until we do so we will be unable to create the moral and political will necessary for making progress on any of the other pressing social issues that we face.

Increasingly, leaders are calling on Americans to hold a thoughtful dialogue on race relations. Dialogue alone is not the answer, but it is an essential first step. Only when we can talk sensibly and safely about racism and race relations will we be able to reduce the tensions that exist among individuals of different races.

"Every one of us could write a book about race. The text is already imprinted in our minds...."

Using Study Circles for Dialogue on Race Relations

Study circles—small-group, democratic, participant-driven discussions—are an effective way to enter this critical dialogue.

A successful study circle creates a cooperative, safe environment where people can express their views candidly. That is particularly important for discussing a charged issue such as race. All the participants in a study circle should be committed to open, respectful dialogue. The leader's role in a study circle is not to teach, but to help the group work toward productive discussion in the midst of a spontaneous exchange of ideas.

Study circles provide an opportunity to explore the assumptions and values that underlie long-held beliefs. When study circles work, participants can try on new ideas and understand better the views of those with whom they differ. They also come to better understand their own views.

Even though just a single study circle session on race relations will produce benefits, a series of discussions will offer more opportunities for people to work through their beliefs and attitudes. As mutual respect builds in the group, participants find it easier to re-examine their own ideas. If your group is racially and ethnically diverse, you will be able to draw on a greater variety of experiences and perspectives.

Core Material for a Discussion Program on Racism and Race Relations: 5 Sessions

These sessions offer several approaches for discussing racism and race relations. Depending on the number of sessions you are planning and your particular focus, you may decide to use one, some, or all of these discussion outlines.

Use the sessions just as they appear here (you can simply photocopy them and distribute them to participants) or adapt them for your group using the suggestions in Part II of this manual.

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Session A
Race relations and racism: Experiences, perceptions, and beliefs

The purpose of this session is to allow each group member to *listen* to others' stories about race relations. It gives each member a chance to *tell* his or her story.

An understanding of and commitment to the study circle process is essential for this session. The essence of the process is thoughtful listening to others to understand their points of view and a willingness to share and re–examine one's own attitudes. Remember, you can disagree without being hostile; you can confront a misperception or mistaken idea without accusing someone of being a racist.

To increase the comfort level of this discussion, your group may wish to break down into pairs for the initial discussion of personal experiences.

General questions to discuss

1. What is your racial, ethnic, or cultural background? Talk for a few minutes about your background.

2. How have your background or experiences contributed to your attitudes about race relations?

3. Have you experienced racism personally? Have you seen it in practice? Has it affected you or people you know? How would your life be different if you didn't have to deal with it?

4. In what ways do your attitudes toward persons of other racial or ethnic groups differ from those of your parents?

5. As you think about your own attitudes, do any of them run counter to the ideals that you hold? If so, how do you deal with that internal conflict?

6. You probably have heard expressions of prejudice from family members, friends, co–workers, or neighbors. How do you think they learned their prejudice? How do you feel when you hear these expressions? How do you react?

7. How often do you have contact with people of other races or ethnic groups? What is that like?

8. Do you have friends of other races? If so, how did you get to know them? Is it hard to make friends with people of other races? If so, why?

9. Many white people have friends of other races, but they often see these friends as "exceptions to the rule." Why do you think this is so?

10. How do you help your children deal with racism? How do you help them understand race relations?

Group members must understand that they can disagree without being hostile and that they can confront a misperception or mistaken idea without accusing someone of being a racist.

Cases for discussion

- An African–American couple is turned down for a mortgage by a bank, despite the fact that white couples in similar financial situations have been approved for mortgages.

- A Hispanic woman does not get a job as a receptionist because she speaks English with an accent.

- A white man who wants to be on the police force is not hired, while several minority applicants with lower scores on the qualifying test are hired because of a court–ordered affirmative action program.

- An environmental survey of a small city shows that poor minority neighborhoods have significantly higher levels of environmental toxins known to impair normal development in children.

- An African–American woman who works at a mostly white corporation notes that some of her white co–workers are more critical of her work when she wears braids in her hair and dresses in contemporary African fashions.

- An Asian American woman has cosmetic surgery on her eyes so that they'll have a more "Anglo" look, feeling that she'll be more attractive this way. Some of her friends think that she doesn't appreciate her own ethnic beauty and that she'll perpetuate that attitude among non–Asians; others think she's simply exercising her prerogative to do whatever makes her feel comfortable with herself.

Questions on the cases

1. What is your first response to each of these cases?

2. Racism has sometimes been defined as "prejudice plus power." Do any of these cases fit that pattern?

3. What, if anything, do you think the people described in each of the cases should do?

4. What, if anything, do you think the government should do in these cases?

Session B
The prevalence and power of racism in America

The purpose of this session is to examine together some common viewpoints about the current state of race relations in this country and to think about some of the beliefs that underlie those views.

Viewpoint 1
Racism is a powerful force that we must eliminate.

Racism is pervasive and powerful in America, harming African–Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Arab–Americans, and, less directly, whites. Discrimination on the basis of race deprives many Americans of a good education, good jobs, promotions, decent housing, and access to credit. For example, even when blacks have the same level of education, they earn less than whites. This kind of discrimination means that minorities often lack economic opportunity, status, and other important sources of self–esteem.

Viewpoint 2
Blacks and other minorities still suffer from past forms of racism.

Even though discrimination has declined significantly over the past 25 years and there are more opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities, most minorities continue to receive a strong (though sometimes subtle) message from our society that they are not as capable as others. African–Americans, in particular, have a horrible legacy—that of slavery and 100 years of deprivation after the Civil War. It is unrealistic to expect any culture to overcome hundreds of years of oppression in a generation or two; we as a society must recognize that we are dealing with a legacy of past injustices. Though African–Americans have a unique history of oppression, other racial and ethnic groups have suffered oppression as well.

Viewpoint 3
The biggest problem people of color face is a declining economy.

African–Americans and Hispanics do have a harder time making it than whites, but this is not due primarily to racism and discrimination. It is largely because economic opportunities have declined at a time when many minorities are still at the bottom of the economic ladder. Over the past 20 years, our economy has lost the low–skill jobs that once sustained the working poor and the manufacturing jobs that once lifted poor people into the middle class. As a result, blacks and Hispanics are stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder and are not able to move up the way Italians, Irish, Jews, Polish, and other ethnic groups once did.

Viewpoint 4
Some minority cultures don't value hard work or schooling. This is the main problem.

Racism no longer holds back minorities as it once did. The evidence is a thriving black middle class, the success of Asian Americans and some Hispanic groups, and the success of foreign–born blacks in comparison with native–born African–Americans. Racism has become a crippling fixation for minorities; the image of victimization has isolated and weakened the black community in particular. Many of the problems of poor minorities are due to a dysfunctional culture that fails to emphasize education and hard work. In addition, the welfare system discourages initiative and leads to an ever–expanding number of families headed by single mothers. The climate of crime and violence in many poor minority communities further discourages work on anything other than mere survival.

Viewpoint 5
Racism will never be eliminated. People of color will do better if they focus on building from the strengths of their own cultures.

Too much time has been lost trying to fit in with the values of white culture. Even those people of color who have "done everything right" and who have attained success according to the standards of the majority culture continue to face racism on a daily basis. It is time for people of color to realize that many white people will never give up or share power. Rather than trying to change white people's attitudes, people of color should focus on themselves. They should strive to build cultural, political, social, and economic institutions that build on the strengths of their own cultures.

Questions on the viewpoints

1. How powerful and widespread is racism in America?

2. Does one of the viewpoints come close to your own?

3. What experiences, beliefs, and values might lead a reasonable person to support the views that are different from your own?

4. Are there viewpoints not represented here, or perhaps a combination of the views, that you think best describe how widespread racism is in our country?

5. How widespread is racism in our community?

6. How does this discussion of racism in America and in our community affect our ideas about dealing with it?

Session C
Changing racist attitudes

Even though there is a general sense that racial strife is increasing, there is little consensus on what we should do about it. This is a question that will face individuals, local communities, and institutions throughout our society. This session considers several viewpoints about how we can confront and change racist attitudes.

Perceptions rather than realities frequently guide our behaviors, especially toward individuals of other races. Changes in attitude precede changes in behavior, but how can we change attitudes?

Viewpoint 1
Whites must change attitudes and reach out.

Despite the civil rights movement and greater acceptance of diversity, many white Americans continue to harbor racist attitudes toward Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and especially blacks. White people who want to end racism need to help other whites understand their racism, come to terms with it, and leave it behind. In addition, whites must create bridges to the separate worlds of other races. Since whites have been and continue to be the dominant group in society, it is their responsibility to take the first steps. White people need to reach out, create dialogues, invite minorities to participate in their organizations, and volunteer to work with minorities on minorities' issues and concerns. This will create a healthier racial climate and will improve profoundly the lives of many Americans.

Viewpoint 2
Working–class people must unite to fight racism.

Racism divides working–class African–Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and whites from each other. These divisions have prevented the solidarity necessary for a working–class movement such as exists in other industrialized nations. Some American leaders have played on these divisions to prevent a united effort by poor, working–class, and middle–class Americans to make significant political and economic changes. Therefore, racism helps maintain the power and wealth of the few, at the expense of the many. It is one of the main reasons that the United States has low taxes for the rich, no universal health care, and no political party that represents workers. Racism will end only when working–class people understand that race divides them and that they need to move beyond it to form a coalition that represents their mutual economic interests.

Viewpoint 3
Leaders must initiate a massive education campaign.

Progress toward racial equality has slowed because most leaders in our society have failed to speak out against racism. A large–scale public relations campaign could build a new national consensus for civil rights. The campaign should use influential leaders of all races—athletes, actors, celebrities, politicians, journalists—to promote diversity and racial justice. Schools, where Americans come into closest contact with people of other races, should be a critical part of the campaign—they should integrate anti–racism programs into their standard curricula. Churches, synagogues, and mosques should also participate. Social change requires national will; the tools of marketing, advertising, and the media (largely controlled by whites), along with special programs in our educational and religious institutions, can help create that national will.

Viewpoint 4
Minority leaders must stop alienating whites.

While there are white racists, most white Americans want racial equality. Unfortunately, the hostility and "victim mentality" of some minority leaders have alienated many well–meaning white people. Affirmative action has also undermined support for civil rights because it contradicts a fundamental American value—equal treatment for all. In the early part of the civil rights movement, blacks and whites worked together with great success. Now many people of color have given up on whites. The fight against racism requires cooperation among ***all*** peoples. Minorities and their leaders must not permit a few racists to separate them from those white Americans who want racial justice.

Viewpoint 5
Minority communities must help themselves first.

The problems of poor urban communities have created a negative image of minorities—especially of blacks and Latinos—for many middle–class Americans. Whites, most of whom live in the suburbs, are terrified by the crime, drug trade, and violence in the inner city. (So are most people who live in inner–city neighborhoods.) When nearly one out of every four African–American males aged 20–29 is either in jail, on probation, or on parole, is it unreasonable to be afraid of a young black man wearing sneakers and a leather jacket? Whites are aware of the breakdown of the black family, and of the high welfare and school dropout rates among blacks. They find it difficult to sympathize with people who seem to be destroying themselves. Whites will continue to hold racial stereotypes until minority communities begin to help themselves and clean up their neighborhoods. Once they do so, white attitudes will change, and our institutions will offer more help. As it now stands, many whites have come to see inner–city problems as symbols of the whole black community.

Viewpoint 6
People of color must build on the strengths of their own cultures.

Rather than attempting to change the opinions and attitudes of white people, ethnic minorities should embrace and develop the strengths of their own cultures. This may mean setting up their own schools and businesses, and developing their own power base. It may mean having very little contact with whites. Integration has had some negative effects for people of color: it has given the illusion that there is equality in the culture, and has eroded the influence of institutions that are rooted in black, Latino, and Native American communities. In fact, many of today's greatest black leaders were nurtured within all–black institutions such as the black church. Ethnic minorities need to find strength in their own values, which are often different from those of white culture.

Questions on the viewpoints

1. Does one of the viewpoints come close to your own? What experiences, beliefs, and values might lead a reasonable person to support the views that are different from your own?

2. Are there viewpoints not represented above, or perhaps a combination of the views, that you think best describes how we can confront racism?

3. What kinds of groups in our community or our nation support or quietly put up with racist attitudes?

4. How can we use the institutions in our communities (or in our nation) to change racist attitudes?

5. What first steps can we take to help change racist attitudes?

Session D
Public policies for ending race–based inequality and injustice

Should government have a role in ending racial injustice? If so, what should that role be?

Public policy is one aspect of the previous discussion sessions, but here it is the focus. The choices presented here provide three different sets of beliefs about how we can achieve racial justice and equality.

Much of the national political debate about race centers around questions of quotas and affirmative action. How government should address the problems of the inner cities and the needs of the poor also enters into the debate.

(Note: This discussion framework is based on choices presented in the National Issues Forums booklet, *Remedies for Racial Inequality: Why Progress Has Stalled, What Should Be Done*, 1990. For price and ordering information, call Kendall/Hunt Publishers, (800) 338–5578.)

Choice 1
Enforce existing civil rights laws.

We already have anti–discrimination laws in place that apply to housing, schools, jobs, and bank policies in lending. But these laws need to be better enforced. Government should set up an aggressive program to check up on private and public institutions, in order to catch violators of the law. The proper role of government in ending racial injustice is to make sure the rules of the game are truly the same for everyone. Since the Constitution is color–blind, government's only obligation is to ensure that individuals can engage in fair competition for jobs, promotions, and places in schools. Affirmative action, which strives for equality of ***results*** rather than equality of opportunity, goes too far and has been ineffective, creating a white backlash against civil rights.

Choice 2
Affirmative action is needed to level the playing field.

Equality of opportunity is not enough. Since entire racial groups such as African–Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans were systematically denied opportunity in the past, they do not really have a fair chance to succeed today. We can achieve racial equality only by giving advantages to those who start out behind as a result of past injustices and who endure continuing discrimination. Government, businesses, and schools must take measures to ensure fair results, even if some whites lose out. Affirmative action helps people of color compete on a more equal basis. Without it, many people from ethnic minorities will never have a chance to enter the mainstream of society.

Choice 3
Ending poverty is the best way to deal with racial injustice.

The greatest obstacle to racial equality today is not racism but the lack of economic and educational opportunities. Therefore, race–specific policies are no longer the answer. The greatest disadvantage faced by many blacks, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans is poverty. Many minority children are particularly hard–hit by poverty. The schools which they attend are poor, and are overwhelmed by drugs, violence, and other social problems caused by poverty. The inner cities have been devastated by a tremendous loss of jobs and decline in wages. Proven programs such as Head Start; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC, a nutrition program); and Job Corps (a job training program) should be expanded so that the needs of the poor in our nation can be adequately met. Government should experiment with initiatives such as public works projects and "urban enterprise zones." The new war on poverty will help alleviate the suffering of all poor Americans. In addition, this approach would win support from whites because it wouldn't single out any particular race.

What should be the goals of public policy on race relations? What role should the government play to achieve those aims?

Questions on the choices

1. What are the strong points of each choice?

2. What are the weak points or problems of each choice?

3. Which do you think is the best choice? Why?

4. Is there any way to combine choices?

5. Racism is a long–standing problem in America. What would you like to say to elected officials about this problem?

Session E
Moving from words to action: What can we do in our community?

It's easy to feel overwhelmed and disheartened by racial divisions. The purpose of this session is to draw out ideas for steps we ***can*** take, as individuals or as a group, to improve the racial climate in our community.

It is possible that a plan of action will emerge from this discussion, but it is not necessary. Since dialogue is critical, devising ways to keep talking or to include new people in the dialogue may be an important next step.

Some examples to consider

• Many study circles have wanted to continue meeting for discussions once they completed the sessions in this manual. Some have met for further discussions on racism and race relations, or have gone on to discuss other issues. Still other study circles have expanded the dialogue, by organizing new study circles to bring in additional participants.

• A neighborhood discussion group in Memphis, Tennessee, wanted to bridge the huge communication gap between blacks and whites in their community and learn from people with different backgrounds. So, they formed an intentionally integrated discussion group. The group, called "The Wednesday Night Club," meets once a month in group members' homes to discuss current social issues.

• Some women members of a black–Jewish coalition in New York decided to form a women's black–Jewish dialogue group. As leaders in a variety of large organizations, they had worked together on social issues but realized there were few opportunities to learn about each other's unique perspectives and experiences based on racial and ethnic backgrounds. (See Pogrebin's article in the annotated bibliography at the end of Part II.)

• "Church pairing," where predominantly white and predominantly black churches join together to learn from each other and work together, is promoted and used by many churches around the country.

• In some communities around the country, volunteers monitor incidents of racist violence and then help to develop community responses to them. (At the national level, the Southern Poverty Law Center's Klanwatch Project is one

*The purpose of this session is to think about what kinds of concrete steps we **can** take, as individuals or as a group, to improve the racial climate in our community.*

of the most well–known of these anti–racism campaigns. To receive more information on the Klanwatch Project, contact its director, Danny Welch, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.)

• In some cities there are community service or peer-tutoring programs that bring together students from diverse backgrounds. Common Ground, a youth leadership program launched in Hartford, Connecticut, exemplifies this approach. It brings together sophomores and juniors from public high schools in Hartford and surrounding towns for leadership training, community service, and a better understanding of how people from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds can work together to address common concerns. (For more information on this program, write to Common Ground, 250 Constitution Plaza, Hartford, CT 06103.)

• Informal and formal student groups across the U.S. organize to fight racism on their campuses. They hold teach–ins, vigils, rallies, and discussions. Some of them organize to lobby for or against specific campus or governmental policies.

• Some college and university administrations sponsor racism and race relations workshops as part of their freshman orientation programs, or for faculty members who will be working with minority students in the classroom.

• Around the country teachers at all levels bring discussion of race relations into their classrooms. (Teaching Tolerance, another project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, provides teachers with resources for promoting interracial and intercultural understanding in the classroom. The materials are offered at low or no cost. Contact: Sara Bullard, Teaching Tolerance, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.)

• The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom launched a Racial Justice campaign. They decided that the best place to begin the campaign was within their own organization, by re–educating their own board, staff, and members about racism. They organized workshops (conducted by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond) in which participants could share their own experiences and re- examine ideas about racism and what to do about it. Other activities in the ongoing Racial Justice campaign include protesting and publicizing incidents of racial violence, as well as building networks between WILPF and organizations working for racial justice. (For more information on WILPF's Racial Justice campaign, contact WILPF, 1213 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107–1691, telephone: (215) 563–7110.)

Talking about what we can do

1. Which of these actions are pertinent for addressing the current problems in our own community?

2. What are the most important events in the history of our school, organization, neighborhood, or in the community as a whole that have had an impact on racial and ethnic relations? How can our understanding of these events make our current efforts more effective?

3. What efforts are currently underway in our community? How can we build on those efforts?

4. What next steps can we take to make a difference in our community? What groups and individuals in this community or outside the community might support us as we act on these ideas?

Organizing Discussions on Racism and Race Relations

Study circles on race relations have been used in many different ways. This section begins with some basic suggestions for planning study circles on race relations, and then offers specific recommendations for organizing a community-wide program.

For more information on existing programs that may serve as models for your effort, please contact the Study Circles Resource Center. We will provide assistance and refer you to additional resources for your discussions.

Planning your program

Whether you are organizing one local study circle or developing a large-scale program that will consist of many study circles, you will need to answer certain questions about the design of your program:

- What will you use for core reading materials? Will you use some or all of the sessions from this manual? Will you adapt or augment the core materials to meet the needs of your particular community or organization?

- How many times will your group(s) meet?

- Who will lead the group(s)?

You may also need to think about how this program will fit within your institution. Schools and colleges can integrate the discussion into classroom or extracurricular activities. Some adult education and elderhostel programs have structured highly participatory classes around the use of this manual. Literacy programs are using the abridged version developed by Laubach Literacy Action in Syracuse, NY.

In some agencies or schools, study circles on race relations have been used for staff development meetings. In businesses that want to address diversity issues on an ongoing basis, study circles are an appealing way for employees to engage in dialogue.

Joining with other organizations to organize community-wide dialogue

In a growing number of communities, organizers are using this manual as a tool for establishing or strengthening lines of communication within a community. Joining with other groups to organize study circles on race relations provides a way to build bridges among people who are from different walks of life and from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The effort usually begins with dialogue among racially diverse leaders representing a broad cross-section of institutions, and then expands to include dialogue among their constituents or members.

All kinds of organizations have participated in these community-wide coalitions: city governments, universities, schools, community leadership groups, YWCAs, ministerial associations, NAACP chapters. What these community-wide efforts have in common is their attempt to include people from all parts of the community and to create avenues for dialogue that never before existed. This kind of effort is challenging, but it yields great rewards.

Basic steps in creating community-wide dialogue:

• Build a diverse working group of community leaders who are committed to fostering dialogue. Do a study circle with these leaders, using the sessions in this manual. Talk with one another about your visions of multiracial and multi-ethnic dialogue.

• Recruit the study circle leaders. Hold a "kickoff" program in which your working group makes the call for dialogue to potential leaders and explains the study circle process.

• Invite the local media to cover your program. Media coverage will help people in the community understand the value of participating.

• Hold a training session for the leaders. The continuing education department of a nearby college or university, the community leadership organization in your city, or community educators may be able to organize this facet of your program.

• Recruit participants. Though it is possible for each leader to recruit a racially and ethnically diverse group, it may be easier to ensure racial and ethnic diversity in each group by "pairing" groups after the initial recruitment. Having a diverse working group from the start makes it easier to recruit diverse participants at this stage.

• Encourage groups to set study circle dates within a specific time period so that all of the study circles in the community are going on more or less within the same time frame.

• After the groups have been meeting for a couple of sessions, hold another session for the leaders. At that time, leaders can share questions, frustrations, and ideas with the trainer and one another.

• Hold a joint community function of all study circles at the conclusion of the program. This can be a sharing of what the study circles have learned, a report to officials and community leaders, and a celebration of the community coming together to deal with this important issue.

Leading Discussions on Racism and Race Relations

The leader plays an important role in a study circle on any issue. He or she helps the group members to communicate openly with each other and helps them to focus on the topic at hand. "Leading a Study Circle" (p. 21) provides general advice on facilitating discussions. What follows are some special considerations for leaders of discussions on racism and race relations.

Establishing ground rules

• **While respectful listening is a key ground rule in any study circle, in a study circle on race relations it is of utmost importance.** As you help the group establish ground rules in the beginning of the first session, begin by presenting the most basic ones: everyone has the opportunity to participate; the role of each group member is to share honestly and listen carefully; each person's views deserve a respectful hearing. Explain that your role as the leader is not to "teach" but to facilitate the dialogue.

• **Stress that it is everyone's responsibility to help make the discussions work.** One good way of doing this is to ask group members to come up with ground rules that will help make them more comfortable in these discussions. Here are some useful additional ground rules for discussions of race relations:

- what is said within this group should stay within this group
- each group member should treat every other group member with respect
- when there is disagreement, keep talking, explore the disagreement and search for areas of agreement
- group members can confront a misperception or mistaken idea without accusing someone of being a racist
- if someone says something that inadvertently offends another member of the group, that person should feel free to say that s/he feels offended.

When group members have participated in setting the ground rules, they will be better prepared to work out disagreements and misunderstandings as the study circle progresses.

Encouraging open, respectful communication

• **In discussions of racism and race relations, creating safety and comfort within the group is your highest priority.** People can best share their experiences and ideas when they feel safe. They need to know that other people respect what they've lived through. To help establish this atmosphere early on, it may be useful to break the group into pairs for the initial discussion of cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. (See Session A.) Not only is it easier to begin talking to just one person, but later in the discussion there is the feeling of having a friend and "ally" in the group.

• **If any group member belittles and ridicules another, intervene immediately to stop the attack.** People are more likely to be honest if they know that attacks will be interrupted.

Facilitating cross–cultural communication

• **Sensitivity, empathy, and familiarity with people of different backgrounds are essential qualities for the leader.** If you have not had the opportunity to spend time in a multiracial or multi–ethnic setting, get involved in a community program that gives you that opportunity.

• **Even though some of the conversation inevitably revolves around differences, set a tone of unity in the group.** After all, we have more similarities as human beings than differences as members of particular racial or cultural groups. Having co–moderators from different ethnic groups helps establish cross–cultural unity in the study circle.

• **Help people to appreciate and respect their own and others' communication styles.** People's cultural backgrounds affect the ways in which they communicate. For example, some cultures tend to be more outspoken and directive, while others are more reserved. Some cultures value listening more than speaking. In other cultures, taking a stand is of utmost importance. Help group members to realize there is no "right" way to communicate, and that understanding one another takes practice! Your leadership should demonstrate that each person has an important and unique contribution to make to the group.

• **Don't let participants' awareness of cultural norms lead to stereotyping.** Generalizations are just that: they don't necessarily apply to individuals within a culture.

• **Remind the group, if necessary, that no one can represent his or her entire culture.** Each person's experiences, as a unique individual and as a member of an ethnic group, are unique and valid. As one African–American woman said of black–white communication, "When you have some African–Americans in your group, the whites shouldn't think they are getting 'the black perspective'; but without African–Americans in the group, whites won't hear *any* black perspectives."

• **Encourage group members to use their own experiences in the attempt to empathize with those who have been victims of discrimination.** Many members of ethnic minorities have experienced or know of experiences that make racial discussions a very personal issue. Others, particularly those in the ethnic majority, may not have thought as extensively about their own culture and its effects on their lives. To aid this, you may want to encourage people to think about times in their own lives when they have been treated unfairly, or to think about times when their own cultural group was oppressed. For study circle participants that are currently at the receiving end of racism, this could seem invalidating unless you explain that you are trying to build empathy and understanding among all members. Remind people that no one can know exactly what it feels like to be in anyone else's shoes.

• **Encourage group members to talk about their *own* cultures, rather than other people's cultures.** In this way, they will be less likely to make inaccurate generalizations about other cultures. Also, listening to others recount their own experiences breaks down stereotypes and broadens understanding.

General Information on the Study Circle Process

The information in this section comes from Resource Briefs developed by the Study Circles Resource Center. We suggest that you distribute "The Role of the Participant" to group members prior to the discussion.

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What is a Study Circle?

Basic Format

A dozen people are comfortably seated around a living room or meeting room, one speaking, several others looking like they would like to make a point, one skimming an article as if searching for a particular item, another scanning the group, and the others listening attentively. This is a study circle in action.

In a study circle, 5–20 people meet several times to discuss the various choices our society or their organization might make concerning a social or political issue. Complex issues are broken down into manageable subdivisions, and controversial topics are dealt with in depth.

Each discussion lasts approximately two hours and is directed by a well-prepared study circle leader whose role is to aid in lively but focused discussion. Participants receive in advance about an hour's worth of reading material covering the topic for the session.

Two individuals, the organizer and the leader, are central to the creation and success of a study circle. The study circle organizer selects or develops the study circle course material, recruits participants, arranges the logistics of the meetings, and chooses the discussion leader. The study circle leader stimulates and moderates the discussion and guides the group toward the goals that it has agreed upon.

Philosophy and Background

The study circle is a well-tested, practical, and effective method for adult learning and social change. Study circles are voluntary, informal, democratic, and highly participatory. They assist participants in confronting challenging issues and in making difficult choices. Study circles engage citizens in public and organizational concerns, bringing the wisdom of ordinary people to bear on difficult issues. Cooperation and participation are stressed so that the group can capitalize on the experience of all its members.

The study circle is a well-tested, practical, and effective method for adult learning and social

The study circle is small-group democracy in action; all viewpoints are taken seriously and each participant has an equal opportunity to participate. The study circle belongs to the participants: individual members ultimately set the agenda and control the content of the discussions. The process—democratic discussion among equals—is as important as the content.

The goal of a study circle is not to impart enough facts to make the participants into experts, but rather to deepen their understanding and judgment by focusing on the values that underlie opinions. The reading material presents a variety of viewpoints and the leader encourages expression of personal views and experiences. The group "works through" difficult issues and grapples with choices. Common ground is sought in the end, but consensus or compromise is not necessary.

Suitability to a Variety of Organizations

Almost any organization can use a study circle to educate and empower its membership. Churches, civic and community groups, businesses, advocacy organizations, and unions have all used this small-group discussion format. Study circles are appropriate for a large national organization that may develop an original study circle course for 100 different discussion groups and for a small local group that may use a book for a single study circle.

A study circle will provide benefits for both the participants and the sponsoring organization. The participants gain knowledge, improve their communication skills, increase their self-esteem, and have a rewarding personal experience. For the sponsoring organization, a study circle represents a valuable training opportunity that can improve participants' ability to advance the organization's interests and may increase their commitment to the organization. A study circle will also benefit an organization's leaders by providing valuable feedback and suggestions.

Variations on the Basic Format

There are many variations to the basic format for a study circle. The ideal study circle meets once a week for at least three sessions and rarely for more than five or six. While regular weekly discussions usually produce optimal results, other schedules can also work well. Some groups may want to combine a study circle with their regular monthly meetings. For those groups that cannot meet regularly, a workshop format can be used at a conference or a retreat with the entire study circle taking place in one or two days.

Videotapes or audiotapes as well as written material can be used to spark discussion. Small-group activities and exercises are included in some study circles to add variety to the sessions.

The strength of the study circle is its flexibility. Every group's situation is unique, and study circle organizers are encouraged to adapt the basic format to their communities and organizations in whatever way is appropriate.

Leading a Study Circle

Once a study circle is underway, the study circle leader is the most important person in terms of its success or failure. The leader guides the group toward reaching the goals that have been set by the organizer and the participants. It is the leader's responsibility to stimulate and moderate the discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. While doing all this, the leader must be friendly, understanding, and supportive.

The leader does not need to be an expert or even the most knowledgeable person in the group. However, the leader should be the most well-prepared person in the room. This means thorough familiarity with the reading material, preparation of questions to aid discussion, previous reflection about the directions in which the discussion might go, knowledge of the people and personalities in the group, and a clear understanding of the goals of the study circle.

The most difficult aspects of leading a discussion group include keeping discussion focused, handling aggressive participants, and keeping one's own ego at bay in order to listen to and truly hear participants. A background of leading small-group discussion or meetings is helpful. The following suggestions and principles of group leadership will be useful even for experienced leaders.

Beginning

- **"Beginning is half," says an old Chinese proverb.** Set a friendly and relaxed atmosphere from the start. The goals of the study circle should be discussed and perhaps modified in the first session, as should the ground rules for discussion. It is important that participants "buy in" right from the beginning.

- **Start each session with a brief review of the readings.** This is best done by a participant and will refresh the memories of those who read the session's material and include those who did not. Recapitulation of the main points will also provide a framework for the discussion.

Managing the Discussion

- **Keep discussion focused on the session's topic.** Straying too far could cause each session to lose its unique value. A delicate balance is best: don't force the group to stick to the topic too rigidly, but don't allow the discussion to drift. Most people do not regard a "bull session" as a valuable use of their time.

- **Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate.** Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading is restraining domineering participants. Don't let people call out and gain control of the floor. If you allow this to happen, the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated.

- **Draw out quiet participants.** Do not allow anyone to sit quietly in the corner or to be forgotten by the group. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be.

• **Be an active listener.** You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to potential conflicts.

• **Stay neutral and be cautious about expressing your own values.** As the leader, you have considerable power with the group. That power should be used only for the purpose of furthering the discussion and not for establishing the correctness of a particular viewpoint. If you throw your weight behind the ideas of one faction in the study circle, your effectiveness in managing the discussion will be diminished.

• **Use conflict productively and don't allow participants to personalize their disagreements.** Do not avoid conflict, but try to keep it narrowly focused on the issue at hand. Since everyone's opinion is important in a study circle, participants should feel comfortable saying what they really think—even if it's unpopular.

• **Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.** People need time to think and reflect. Sometimes silence will help someone build up the courage to make a valuable point. Leaders who tend to be impatient may find it helpful to count silently to 10 after asking a question.

• **Do not allow the group to make you the expert or "answer person."** The point of a study circle is not to come up with an answer, but for the participants to share their concerns and develop their understanding. Don't set yourself up as the final arbiter. Let the group decide what it believes and correct itself when a mistake is made.

• **Don't always be the one to respond to comments and questions.** Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be conversing with each other, not just with the leader. Often questions or comments are directed at the leader, but they can be deflected to another member of the group.

• **Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally.** It is helpful to consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion to build upon.

Using Questions Effectively

• **Ask hard questions.** Don't allow the discussion to simply confirm old assumptions. Avoid following any "line," and encourage participants to re-examine their assumptions. Call attention to points that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, whether you agree with them or not.

• **Utilize open-ended questions.** Questions such as, "What other possibilities have we not yet considered?" do not lend themselves to short, specific answers and so are especially helpful for drawing out quiet members of the group.

Concluding

• **Don't worry about attaining consensus.** It's good for the study circle to have a sense of where participants stand, but it's not necessary to achieve consensus. In some cases a group will be split, and there's no need to hammer out agreement.

• **Close each session with a summary and perhaps an evaluation.** Remind participants of the overall goals of the program and ask them whether the discussion helped the group to move toward those goals. You will definitely want evaluations from the group at the midpoint of the program and during the final session.

The Role of the Participant

The participants are the most important ingredients in a study circle. Their interest, enthusiasm, and commitment, along with the skill of the leader, ultimately determine the success of a study circle.

The goal of a study circle is not to master a text or to learn a lot of facts, but rather to deepen understanding and judgment. This can occur in a focused discussion when people exchange views freely and consider a variety of viewpoints. The process—democratic discussion among equals—is as important as the content.

The following points are intended to help you make the most of your study circle experience and to suggest ways in which you can help the group. Although this advice will be self-evident if you have experience in discussion groups, these points will be a valuable reminder to even the most experienced participant.

- **Make a good effort to attend all meetings.** The comfort level of the group depends upon familiarity with other participants, not just as acquaintances or members of the same organization, but as peers in this particular group with its own special history and fellowship.

- **Communicate your needs to the leader.** The leader is responsible for guiding the discussion, summarizing key ideas, and soliciting clarification of unclear points, but he/she may need advice on when this is necessary. Chances are you are not alone when you don't understand what someone has said.

- **Help keep the discussion on track.** Make sure your remarks are relevant; if necessary, explain how your points are related to the discussion. Try to make your points while they are pertinent.

- **Address your remarks to the group rather than the leader.** Feel free to address your remarks to a particular participant, especially one who has not been heard from or who may have special insight. Don't hesitate to question other participants to learn more about their ideas.

- **Listen carefully to others.** Make sure you are giving everyone the chance to speak. Keeping a pen handy to jot down your thoughts may help you listen more attentively since you will not be concerned about losing the point you want to make.

- **Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the discussion.** If you tend to talk a lot in groups, leave room for quieter people. Be aware that some people may want to speak but are intimidated by more assertive people.

- **Don't withdraw from the discussion.** You have a responsibility beyond that of listening. Everyone in the group, including you, has unique knowledge and experience; this variety makes the discussion an interesting learning experience for all. Failing to speak means robbing the group of your wisdom.

- **Engage in friendly disagreement.** Differences can invigorate the group, especially when it is relatively homogeneous on the surface. Don't hesitate to challenge ideas you disagree with. Don't be afraid to play devil's advocate, but don't go overboard. If the discussion becomes heated, ask yourself and others whether reason or emotion is running the show.

• **Remember that humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your points.** A belligerent attitude may prevent acceptance of your assertions. Be aware of how your body language can close you off from the group.

• **Maintain an open mind.** You don't score points by rigidly sticking to your early statements. Feel free to explore ideas that you have rejected or failed to consider in the past.

• **Use your critical faculties.** Don't accept without question the statements made by authors of the readings, the leader, or other participants. Think about whether statements are provable; decide whether assertions are based on fact or opinion, feelings or reason, primary or secondary sources; and be on the lookout for deceptive argument techniques such as bandwagon or scare tactics, personal attack, faulty deductive reasoning, and vague generalizations.

• **Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.** Your own knowledge is not complete until you understand other participants' points of view and why they feel the way they do. It is important to respect people who disagree with you. They have reasons for their beliefs which are usually not dumb or unreasonable. You should be able to make a good case for positions you disagree with. This level of comprehension and empathy will make you a much better advocate for whatever position you come to.

Everyone in the group, including you, has unique knowledge and experience; this variety makes the discussion an interesting learning experience for all.

PART TWO: TAILORING THIS PROGRAM TO YOUR COMMUNITY OR ORGANIZATION

The discussion sessions presented in Part I are designed so that you can photocopy them and distribute them to group members. Should you decide to build on these sessions, this part of the manual begins with ideas for adapting the materials. It concludes with some resources on racism and race relations—three readings and an annotated bibliography. We hope these will be useful to you as you prepare your discussion materials.

The discussion topics you select and the number of sessions you plan will depend on the needs and interests of your community or organization. Whatever your goals or circumstances, there are advantages to holding multiple sessions. Groups that see discussion as a first step toward making decisions about action or goals will probably want to meet several times. Also, groups in communities with racial tensions will benefit from holding several meetings. Whether you hold one, two, or more sessions, dialogue will be productive if it is geared to the interests and needs of group members, their communities, and their organizations.

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Adapting the Discussion Materials

The angle from which you approach the issue of race relations and the way you structure the discussion materials will depend on two things: 1) what you hope to achieve through your study circle program for your community, your organization, and the participants; and 2) who the participants will be—i.e., whether the group(s) will be diverse, whether group members already know one another, whether participants have a common purpose or frame of reference, and participants' education levels.

Productive discussion is most likely to occur when participants have received a well thought–out discussion outline at least several days before the discussion. In addition, reading material is most effective if it is written and compiled with a specific audience in mind. For example, a study circle organized by a church group would be very different from one held by a small business. Similarly, a group that has worked on racism in the past would hold discussions that differ from those held by residents of a community who have not yet worked together on this particular issue.

Reading material is most effective if it is written and compiled with a specific audience in mind.

You may wish to focus your discussion program around a racial problem specific to your community or a position on race relations that is specific to your organization. How you develop the material will depend upon your goals in addressing the problem or position. You could frame material around viewpoints that are prevalent in your community or organization. Or, alternatively, you could place your community's or organization's views within a broader range of viewpoints. Some baseline information about the national context is always helpful for group members, no matter how specific your group's concerns.

Whatever your purposes, material that presents a range of viewpoints is a successful way to generate open and productive discussion: Sessions B, C, and D of the core material in Part I are examples of this kind of discussion material. Using a variety of views as the basis for discussion, group members can see the strength and appeal of different ideas. The viewpoints may represent concrete policy options, points of view, or plans for action. They should be specific, distinct from each other, realistic, and span a wide range. They also should reflect participants' experiences and concerns.

If an issue has been well framed, every participant should find something appealing in each of the viewpoints. Seeing many views in print, participants feel validated and are more likely to say what they truly believe. As a result, they are more likely to listen well, deepen their understanding, and reassess their views.

Presenting a variety of views also helps clarify where people differ and where they agree. As participants strive to understand why others have different positions, they are more likely to understand the values that underlie their opinions. This differs from usual discussion, which doesn't go beyond the level of mere opinion and

quickly degenerates into "debate" of a win–lose nature. It is hard to find common ground when people are defending positions. However, the deeper concerns or values that underlie opinions often have a lot in common. Once underlying values become apparent, it is easier to find common ground among people whose positions may have seemed irreconcilable.

In framing an issue around a range of views or choices, it is especially important to present positions that may not be popular. Even though you should never present ***information*** that is in error, it is useful to present ***views*** that you may believe to be "wrong." It is a challenge to give voice to positions with which you disagree, and to present them in their best possible light. One way to provide balance is to present, along with each view, the strongest reasonable criticisms of that view. It may help to remember two points: 1) presenting a position does not mean you support it; and 2) a consensus–builder or an advocate is effective only when he or she fully understands all viewpoints.

How you develop the material will depend upon your goals.

Rather than rewriting the sessions in Part I, or writing completely new materials, you may simply supplement some of the sessions in Part I with information or perspectives pertinent to your group's concerns. For example, a church group may wish to augment the material with some perspectives on racial justice from church writings; a community group may wish to research the current attitudes within its community or provide some recent articles from its local newspaper.

Readings on Racism and Race Relations

The following readings are reprinted to help you prepare your discussion materials. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Study Circles Resource Center, but present a variety of perspectives in the current national dialogue on racism and race relations.

This article was originally written as a Concept Paper for People For the American Way, whose objective is "Defending Constitutional Liberties." It was revised, extensively documented, and published in *The Journal of Intergroup Relations*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, Spring 1991. It is excerpted here with permission from People For the American Way.

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"Building a New American Consensus on Race Relations"

By Leonard Steinhorn

...While economic and social trends account for much of the recent deterioration in race relations, another reason looms large: there is no national consensus on race issues today. Unlike 25 years ago, when the civil rights movement identified segregation as the problem and built a national consensus against it, today there is little agreement about the nature of the problem and what to do about it. No consensus exists, for example, on what to do with the real and pressing problems of poverty and institutionalized racism. National leaders, who provided critical support for civil rights initiatives a generation ago, today offer little more than platitudes about racial justice and are deeply divided over the role of government in rectifying the consequences of discrimination. The 1960s civil rights consensus—which brought many segments of our nation together in a powerful movement against injustice—seems like a memory from a bygone era.

For a society whose central and most wrenching dilemma is, and historically has been, how to deal with race, new directions are needed and a new consensus must be formed—particularly as we approach the 21st Century with a population more racially and ethnically diverse than at any time in our history....

This paper is built on the premise that national will is a precondition for social change. It argues that initiatives to further the civil rights agenda in the 1990s must be accompanied by efforts to break down public resistance and build national support—not unlike what happened a generation ago, when the civil rights movement's appeal to the nation's conscience resulted in landmark legislation and historic social change. If the fight against poverty and discrimination is to make similar headway today, the civil rights movement must launch a public education campaign designed for the 1990s, one that counters the current myths and misunderstandings that now stand in the way of racial progress. Its purpose is not to pass legislation or lift people out of poverty, but rather to create the cultural context and national climate that could make these goals more attainable.

Another premise, buttressed by research, is built into this paper: because the American racial dilemma is a problem created by whites, any significant improvement in race relations depends largely on changing white attitudes toward blacks. This was the premise of Gunnar Myrdal's ground-breaking 1944 book on race relations, *An American Dilemma*, and it remains valid today. While it is true that both white and black attitudes currently feed on each other and contribute to today's escalation of racial misunderstanding, one can-

not deny that a primary source of the problem remains the white community's continuing inability to understand the peculiar history and situation of blacks in America. A public education campaign must therefore concentrate on sensitizing the white majority to the black experience in America and, more specifically, to the ongoing discrimination blacks face in their daily lives. And while such a campaign would by necessity be directed at whites, it would also send a powerful message to blacks that after a decade in which their concerns were greeted with hostility and neglect, a major national effort was underway to affirm and communicate their experience as a minority in America.

Finally, this paper recognizes that the black–white problem is not the only ethnic flash point in America—that other ethnic tensions pervade our society and must be addressed. The problems between blacks and Asians in New York, or between whites and Hispanics in the southwest, suggest that misunderstandings riddle the relations between all ethnic groups in America. While we believe that the black–white problem remains America's central dilemma, and is therefore the focus of our efforts, our hope is that the observations and models developed in this paper can be extended to relations between other ethnic groups in America. The United States may be the most diverse society in the world, and it is becoming more so every day. For the survival of our democratic ideals and the prosperity of our country, these misunderstandings cannot be allowed to fester.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS CONSENSUS?

In the 36 years since the Supreme Court struck down the separate but equal doctrine in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the United States has made great strides toward improving the plight of black Americans. Congress has passed sweeping legislation to promote equal opportunity, the workplace is becoming increasingly desegregated, black economic and political power is greater than ever, and an overwhelming majority of whites now agree with the general principle that racial discrimination in any form is wrong. Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder speaks of "a new mainstream: those individuals who practice inclusion, rather than exclusion; who bring people together rather than pit people against each other; who want to build upon our progress, rather than destroy those achievements." No one believes we have reached the promised land of racial harmony, but most Americans—black and white—agree that progress has been made.

Yet all the progress notwithstanding, there is a new and insidious form of separatism taking root in our society. Fortunately, it is not legal separation, even though recent court decisions have indeed narrowed certain legal protections of civil rights laws. Instead, today's barriers are cultural, experiential and attitudinal—and perhaps more intractable because legislation and political action cannot immediately change them. While blacks and whites work together more than in the past and even agree in principle that discrimination is bad, there is a growing separation in their basic views of the world and each other. According to every expert and article consulted for this paper, relations between blacks and whites today are largely characterized by serious misunderstandings and a massive failure to communicate with each other. One needs only to look at the daily newspaper for evidence: from the bitter division over affirmative action and "diversity" on college campuses, to public opinion polls showing the persistence of racially–prejudiced attitudes, to the divisive political debate on "quotas."...

But while whites and blacks agree that discrimination in the abstract is bad, they disagree on most other racial issues, particularly on the extent of discrimination in America and on what further remedies need to be implemented. To a majority of blacks, discrimination is a daily, ongoing burden. But as Lee Sigelman and Susan Welch write in *Black Americans' Views of Racial Inequality: The Dream Deferred*, their new book on race relations, "Only about one white in ten... believes that blacks encounter discrimination in getting unskilled jobs or fair wages, and the odds are little better than fifty / fifty that a white person can think of even one type of discrimination from which blacks in their area suffer."[1]

Moreover, with increasing numbers of whites making claims of reverse discrimination, the consensus against discrimination has even been used to undermine racial progress and divide the races from one another. As a concept, discrimination has become so detached from the notion of racial progress that someone so reprehensible as David Duke can attract significant support by opposing affirmative action as discriminatory against white people.

These diverging views on the reality of discrimination and the future of race relations suggest that the old civil rights consensus has neither the strength nor the scope to generate national attention on today's pressing issues. Commentators from across the political spectrum express concern that the new separatism between the races is even eroding some of the basic hopes and assumptions of the old civil rights consensus....

Even the dream of an integrated America—a dream central to the hopes and drive of the civil rights movement—seems to have foundered on the jagged rocks of unmet goals, neglect, resentment and misunderstanding. Historian C. Vann Woodward, writing in *The New Republic*, noted that "Black participation has appreciably increased in sports, entertainment, arts, and public schools, but apart from the Army, this has not meant true integration or the elimination of racial separation in American life."[2]

Nor is integration even a realistic goal for many today. Not only is the word itself rarely heard in public discourse, but the ideal has so withered from frustration and neglect that the best people seem to hope for is an absence of hostility between the races, much like the Cold War. *New York Magazine* political writer Joe Klein reported in 1989 that "Integration seems an impossibly romantic notion now. Even to propose it as the solution to the racial morass raises derisive hoots in the black community and patronizing shrugs and smiles from whites." A March 1990 five-part series in *The Washington Post* on the promise and failings of integration found that "Integration, not only in schools but across all of America's major institutions, is a concept that has gone out of fashion. To many whites, integration came to mean social engineering, quotas, forced busing. To many blacks it became synonymous not with equality, but with assimilation, giving up a sense of self and community in a perhaps futile effort to be accepted by the majority-white culture, and capitulating to the cause of harmony rather than pursuing the more elusive goal of social justice."[3]...

To begin rebuilding a civil rights consensus in America, it is essential to recognize the extent to which attitudes have changed in the last 25 years. A Coca-Cola message of harmony on a hilltop does not fit today's mood or circumstances. The public has few shared assumptions to build on, and even the commonly-used words "integration" and "discrimination" mean different things to blacks and whites.

POLARIZATION AND THE PERCEPTION GAP

Any attempt to educate the public and change attitudes on the continuing problem of discrimination must first take into account the full extent of the perception gap between the two races. There is considerable research to document this gap—research that can help identify ways to overcome it. And while the research indicates that black and white attitudes are not monolithic and in fact share some common ground, particularly when class and income factors are considered, clear patterns nevertheless emerge that show a racial dividing line in the way blacks and whites perceive the world....

Unanimity in social science research is a rare phenomenon, but in the case of racial attitudes virtually every study leads to similar conclusions. The good news is that blacks and whites oppose racial discrimination in principle and say they are living and working together more than ever before. Younger people tend to be the most progressive in their attitudes toward racial tolerance. The bad news is that white prejudice toward blacks persists at all levels of society, and the two races hold markedly different views on a broad range of race-related issues and remedies. While blacks and whites both applaud the end of Jim Crow, there is little consensus on where to go from there.

The clearest example of the gap is the way whites and blacks view the problem of discrimination. A substantial proportion of whites believe the civil rights gains of the 1960s largely ended the problem of discrimination in America. Whites, although generally well-meaning, do not think that blacks continue to face significant discrimination. As the *Gallup Poll News Service* wrote in December 1989, "Large majorities think blacks now have the same opportunities as whites in their communities in terms of obtaining jobs, housing and education. Many whites are unable to name even one type of discrimination that affects blacks in their area. Moreover, while whites do not minimize the problems discrimination can cause, they still tend to think that blacks are to blame for their problems, and almost half of all white respondents in a 1989 *Washington Post* poll believe that blacks "don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves out of poverty." Considering these attitudes, white opposition to affirmative action, anti-discrimination laws and anti-poverty initiatives seems logical.[4]

Blacks, on the other hand, see and experience persistent discrimination. The discrimination may be more subtle today, but they feel it just as deeply. They believe that whatever progress has taken place is a result of black efforts, with little help from whites. Blacks blame society for the problems in the black community, and they increasingly fault white intentions for the nation's failure to address these problems. As Lee Sigelman and Susan Welch write, "according to the world view of the typical black, significant racial discrimination persists and largely accounts for where blacks as a group stand today. As a remedy, government action is necessary, even though blacks themselves are seen . . . as having gone a long way in helping their own cause."[5]

These different views of discrimination spill over into a larger perception gap about life and politics in America. Generally speaking, whites believe that our nation's problems with racism and civil rights were solved 20 years ago, while blacks see racial discrimination as an ongoing and daily obstacle to opportunity and equality. When blacks say civil rights, whites say special interests. When blacks see discrimination, whites see equal opportunity. When blacks support affirmative action and equal opportunity laws, whites regard them as quotas, special privilege and reverse discrimination. And when blacks say racism, whites respond that they are being overly sensitive....

Clearly, we must end this cycle of misunderstanding. It serves the interests of neither blacks nor whites. The more a racial misunderstanding takes on a life of its own, the more it undermines the possibility of rebuilding a strong national consensus for progress in race relations. It is essential, therefore, to stop the cycle of misunderstanding at its source, which is why a campaign designed to bridge the perception gap and develop new shared assumptions must be at the center of any civil rights revival. As the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., concluded about a Harris poll that documented aspects of the perception gap, "These gaps in perception underscore the need for continuing educational efforts to help white Americans appreciate that race continues to be a factor in influencing our daily lives."

CREATING AND MARKETING A NEW CIVIL RIGHTS MESSAGE

When the Kerner Commission issued its landmark report in 1968, it called for national action in three areas: improving equal opportunity, addressing the plight of the disadvantaged, and "increasing communication across racial lines to destroy stereotypes, halt polarization, end distrust and hostility, and create common ground for efforts toward public order and social justice." The report emphasized that to achieve social, political and economic goals, we will need "new attitudes, new understanding, and above all, new will."[b]

For the past two decades, the nation's civil rights emphasis has been on the first two Kerner goals, equal opportunity and poverty, but not the third—changing attitudes. Ironically, our failure to create new attitudes and understanding, particularly in the white community, may help account for the anemic and halting progress in combatting poverty and opening opportunity for blacks.

Twenty-five years ago, the civil rights message was defined by circumstances and events. There were heroes and villains, good and bad, right and wrong—and national leadership to communicate it. Heightened public awareness made the civil rights message easier for mainstream America to accept. That is not the case today. There is no emerging civil rights consensus, the two races disagree on most goals and perceptions, and racial tensions have made blacks and whites skeptical of efforts to raise awareness. Compounding the problem, national political leaders have largely abandoned civil rights as a moral cause, often out of political expediency. If the civil rights community hopes to build a consensus for further gains and lay the foundation for progress in the 1990s, it must identify and communicate specific, targeted messages that bridge the perception gap, humanize the issue and end the cycle of misunderstanding between the races.

In recent years, there have been no nationwide public education efforts to promote civil rights. One reason may be that the major issues of today—poverty, equal opportunity and institutionalized discrimination—are more sensitive and complex than the issues of voting and public accommodations that drove the movement in the 1960s. Nor is there any moral velocity coming from national leaders or from recent efforts to pass civil rights legislation. Moreover, public education campaigns not connected to an immediate threat or moral drama too often come off as contrived efforts to promote harmony—what some critics would call "touchy-feely." Another factor is the considerable backlash among many whites against feeling "guilt" for the nation's racial problems.

A survey of programs designed to lessen racial tensions in various institutions shows that the most effective approach is to challenge stereotypes and misunderstandings without making people feel bad for holding them. These programs are not aimed at the general goal of promoting harmony, but rather at shattering preconceptions and broadening awareness of the different realities and experiences of other people.

The Army, one of the most integrated institutions in the country, runs an intensive three-month race relations course on the psychology of prejudice that has trained more than 10,000 equal opportunity officers in the last 20 years. Some corporations, including IBM, DuPont, Corning and Xerox have developed race-sensitivity models that educate employees on the reasons for affirmative action and raise awareness about the way cultural differences influence job performance. A successful prejudice reduction program run by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, "A World of

Difference," has brought together schools, community leaders and the media in 25 cities. While its general message emphasizes the softer themes of harmony and pluralism, it has been especially effective in training teachers about cultural difference and stereotypes.

The question is how to mount an effective public education program designed to pierce myths and bridge misunderstandings nationwide, especially when there is no political or legislative vehicle to dramatize it. One area that may offer some guidance is the emerging field of social marketing, which is an approach to social issues that applies market research and techniques. As in commercial marketing, which articulates a need for products, social marketing aims to create awareness about issues and educate the public about why these issues are important. It employs the full range of persuasion techniques: advertising, public service announcements, using celebrities, working with television producers, creating stories for the media, serving as a source of information on the particular subject, influencing national leaders. The ultimate goal is to develop a message campaign that uses all the necessary information, stories and examples to guide an audience to question its assumptions and change its way of thinking.

Successful examples include the Harvard Alcohol Project, which has persuaded numerous TV shows to promote its cause, the designated driver concept; national campaigns by the Children's Defense Fund and Planned Parenthood to raise a climate of concern about teenage pregnancy; the consumer movement's fight for auto safety; and, the Environmental Media Association, which works with the entertainment community to develop story lines on environmental issues for prime-time shows.

The evident need to market issues—especially in an era of competing messages and ideas—has led certain groups to make social marketing the top priority of their work. Proponents of this view argue that no message is effective if it is not heard. For example, Children NOW!, a California advocacy organization for children, was established two years ago with the express purpose of marketing children's issues to policy makers and the press. Its recent report card on children in California, while substantive and well-researched, received considerable press coverage largely because it used prominent Californians—Jackie Joyner-Kersee, Peter Uberroth, Jaime Escalante—as "graders." It marketed its message.

Although this approach has considerable potential for addressing the problem of race relations, it must be cautioned that the social marketing model has not yet been applied to something as broad or complex. Most of the successful social marketing programs involve either discrete behavioral changes (designated drivers, birth control, seat belts) or consciousness raising on issues that already have public support (children, the environment). As a staff member of Children NOW! commented in a telephone interview, children's issues are "a real easy sell." That cannot be said about race relations, particularly with the perception gap today.

[Editor's notes: The remainder of Steinhorn's article presents a plan for developing a public education campaign targeted at racial misunderstandings.

People For the American Way is eager to initiate a national dialogue regarding a new American consensus on race relations as described in the article above. Send responses to: Sanford Horwitt, People For the American Way, 2000 "M" Street, N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036, telephone: (202) 467–4999.]

FOOTNOTES

1. Lee Sigelman and Susan Welch, *Black Americans' Views of Racial Inequality: The Dream Deferred* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), page 165.

2. C. Vann Woodward, "The Crisis of Caste," *The New Republic*, November 6, 1989.

3. Joe Klein, "Race: The Issue," *New York Magazine*, May 29, 1989; "Hard Choices in Black and White," *The Washington Post*, March 4–8, 1990 (five-part series on race relations—quotation is from David Maraniss, "Integration: Its Promise and Failings," March 4, 1990).

4. Diane Colasanto, "Public Wants Civil Rights Widened for Some Groups, Not for Others," *Gallup Poll News Service*, December 20, 1989; Richard Morin, "Fewer Whites Voicing Racial Bias," *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1989.

5. Sigelman and Welch, *Black Americans' Views of Racial Inequality: The Dream Deferred*, page 165.

6. The Kerner Commission report was formally known as the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Public Disorders*, March 1968. Quotes from pages 11 and 1.

The following excerpts are from a speech given by Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.) in the U.S. Senate on April 2, 1992. The complete speech is in the *Congressional Record* of that day. Excerpted with permission.

I gave a statement in New Haven, CT, a few days ago, the key points of which I intend to repeat here this afternoon. I do so for the sole purpose of trying to help jump-start the debate about the crisis in our cities.... I think it is essential that we rise above the past prejudices and the divisions in this country in order to clearly focus on the future of our urban neighborhoods and the relationship of that future to the rest of the needs of this country....

Today, this land of the free that we celebrate proudly has the highest incarceration rate of any nation in the world; we imprison black males at five times the rate of South Africa; and a violent crime is committed in or around one of our schools every 6 seconds.

I think we have to be honest about this and I think it is time for us in the U.S. Senate and elsewhere in this nation to debate why this is happening....

It is fair to say and most would agree that these issues [of race and the inner city] are not easy to discuss. They are at least as controversial as discussing the relationship between men and women which caused the nation and the Senate so much agony during the Thomas hearings last fall. There is so much sensitivity about these issues, so many ways to be misunderstood or taken out of context that I am tempted to heed Mark Twain's warning that it is often better to keep one's mouth shut and be thought stupid than to open it and remove all doubt.

... [W]e cannot advance, we cannot change things and focus on the cities or an urban agenda or understand the needs of this nation if we are not willing to say honestly what is on our minds; if we do not at least begin a real dialogue in this country.

... How is it that ... this phenomenon of disintegration and violence has overwhelmed communities and created new and dangerous cultures?

The questions themselves intimidate—so much so that people avoid asking them. And I might add that in the last few days I have well learned why it is that some people avoid asking them. How is it, for example, that since 1965, the percentage of black children living with both parents through the age of 17 has gone from 50 percent to 6 percent? But this is not a trend exclusive to the black community. And it is not exclusive even to minority communities. The comparable figures for white children in this country, after all, are 81 percent to 30 percent. The trends are the same. It only seems worse in the minority community because the starting point is so much lower and because the impacts of social change always seem to hit hardest at the most vulnerable in our society.

... [W]e better ask ourselves whether this social disintegration is merely the result of upside-down budget priorities on the part of the federal and state governments, or whether it is primarily the consequence of lost industrial jobs, or whether it is simply part of a larger trend of deteriorating values that has struck all sectors of our society to some degree....

Our long-term goal has to be to restore the entire institutional fabric of many of these communities, and no less than that will get the job done. That means dealing with every single aspect of community—parenting, the schools, child care, housing, youth sports, counseling—all of the things that have been sucked away over the course of the last 15 years and more, all of the threads in the fabric.

... [T]here is a starting point. Different people in the Senate may differ as to what that starting point is. But there has to be a foundation upon which you can literally create and lift the self-esteem of those people who are now without hope.

What is that starting point?... Certainly good jobs, productive jobs, the transfer of economic power to these communities. Something we have talked about and talked about, but which we really have not engaged in in this country. And, obviously, there has to be an increase of good job skills to go with these jobs.

And there must also be a restoration of public order in these communities. I cannot think of anything better for our country than to design such a program and make it work.

Now there are obstacles to doing this.... Some neighborhoods and some people are so wracked by drugs and crime, so beaten down by the system that they may well be beyond help. And the economic forces that robbed our cities of the industrial and manufacturing jobs are sadly growing stronger, not weaker. Most businesses, you can talk to any CEO, are simply not prepared to move into the poorest neighborhoods.

And we are up to our eyeballs in red ink, making it harder to make some of these choices. But I must tell you that I think towering above each of these obstacles,

restraining us from addressing many of these issues, is another more serious obstacle, and I believe that obstacle is America's unwillingness to confront the issue of race.

Tragically, the fact is that the majority of the white majority in this country does not want to invest more of their scarce tax dollars in minority neighborhoods or what many believe to be predominantly minority problems.

Tragically, too, the crisis in our urban centers has come to be viewed by many people as simply a question of us versus them, thereby preventing real dialogue and real progress.

It would be simple to blame all of this on racism. And there is no doubt—and I want to say it as clearly as I know how—that there is a persistent, cancerous level of racism in this country. It is ugly. It is insidious. And it is present everywhere—in housing, education, and employment. And we, all of us, need to do more to point out that racism and to fight it. We need to show stronger leadership and to reach out for our better, not our baser, instincts.

But the issues and the reasons for our dilemma, frankly, are deeper and more complex than just that. They have their roots in the changing nature of the movement for civil rights, in the turbulent history of race relations, and in the persistence of racial stereotypes.

Thirty years ago, a supporter of the civil rights movement could agree with John Kennedy that the proposition that "race has no role in American life and law" is a "moral issue as old as the Scriptures and as clear as the Constitution." But for the past two decades that same movement has had to depend on laws and rulings that have, by necessity, focused on the role of race in American life and law.

Where once Martin Luther King could depict the struggle for equal rights as a mighty battle between good and evil, a battle where club-wielding sheriffs and attack dogs squared off against peaceful marchers and hymn-singing children, today the civil rights struggle is fought principally in the courts, and the winners and losers are determined by rules that many Americans simply do not understand or that they do not fully accept.

That is one kind of progress—to get to the courts. But it has also deprived many Americans of the images that brought them to the consensus of the civil rights movement, images they easily related to. And it has replaced them with images; that is, lawyers in court, that they love to hate.

... [I]t has also inadvertently driven most of our focus in this country not to the issue of what is happening to the kids who do not get touched by affirmative action, but ... toward an inherently limited and divisive program which is called affirmative action.

I want to be careful here. I say "limited" because by definition it only reaches a fraction of those who need help. And I say "divisive" because all of the data currently show the degree to which people receive it with some resentment—albeit at different levels in different places.

I want to be clear here. I do support affirmative action, not rhetorically, but really. Affirmative action has opened doors for women, for countless minorities, for persons with disabilities. It has helped create a large, growing black middle class in America. It has helped minority businesses. It has opened up bastions of prejudice like the Alabama State Police which had no black members at all in a state that is 30 percent black.

It has caused employers to rethink the standards and tests that they use to qualify people for employment. And it has given the benefit of the doubt to diversity over uniformity on campuses and in workplaces across America. It has, in short, made our country a better, fairer place to live. And this is an important positive side.

But there is a negative side. I think in the interests of building a new consensus in this country we have to be willing to admit that. We have to be willing to acknowledge publicly that, just as the benefits to America of affirmative action cannot be denied, neither can some of the costs. Those costs are illustrated by an astonishing recent poll, a poll taken by the People For the American Way and released a few days ago. [Here Senator Kerry refers to the People For the American Way's study, *Democracy's Next Generation II: A Study of American Youth on Race*, referenced in the bibliography.]

This poll shows a majority of whites—this is incredible—but a majority of whites believes that it is they, not minorities, who are most discriminated against in America today.

... [W]e have an obligation and a responsibility to do everything we can to correct whatever false data or preconceptions have fed the belief that is evidenced in this poll. But I also say that we have to think hard about what it means.

We have to think about the obstacle that it creates to interracial communication and understanding, about the obstacle it creates to opening additional doors of opportunity for all minorities, and about the obstacle it

creates to majority support for future investment in our cities and to those who live in them.

Too many politicians—many of them in my own party—have not acknowledged the obstacles, or even the downsides, for fear that somehow it will rip at the reality of the need for affirmative action. By that failure I believe that we send a message to many of those who feel alienated or abandoned by their government that we simply do not care about them, that we do not realize it is they—far more than we who make and interpret the law—who have borne the burden of compliance with the law. If we do not change that message, if we do not at least communicate our understanding that there are two sides to this issue, then we are going to forfeit our opportunity to remove the obstacles and change the attitudes through dialogue and explanation and appeals to reason. Once that opportunity is truly gone, our hope for real progress will be gone with it.

Some people have asked me why I feel the need to even mention the words "affirmative action" in the same context as a speech on the urban agenda. And why do I talk about white resentment in this speech? I will say why very simply. I believe we cannot change the consensus in this country, we cannot build a new consensus to deal with the problem in the cities, if we cannot change attitudes. And if all we do when sensitivities arise is change the subject, we are in trouble.

... I do not believe that this issue of white resentment can simply be dismissed. If we truly care about racial progress and about our cities, then we have to rebuild the consensus that will make a difference to those cities. We cannot equate fear of crime or concern about deteriorating schools with racism and then expect those we have called racists to turn around and invest in the very neighborhoods they have fled.

We cannot lecture our citizens about fairness and then disregard the legitimate questions they raise about the actual fairness of regulation or law. We cannot deride as politically incorrect the anger of taxpayers who work hard to support their families and then find themselves supporting other families who have been on welfare for several generations....

This is not a speech about affirmative action. It is a speech about our cities. But I do not think that we can get to the agenda of the cities without being honest and breaking down the barrier of the us-and-them syndrome that is sweeping this country....

I might also point out that urban crime, while much of it is intraracial, is also the single, most deadly poison there is to improving relations between the minorities and the majority of the people in this country. In shaping opinions and in defining behavior, fear will defeat fairness almost every time.

[Editor's note: The remainder of Senator Kerry's speech presents an agenda for urban revival. During the month of April, the *Boston Globe* covered the controversy that followed this speech.]

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Newsweek *Contributing Editor Cary, author of the memoir "Black Ice," is working on a novel involving the underground railroad.*

"As Plain as Black and White"

By Lorene Cary

I don't know exactly what Lisa Williamson, the self-named "raptivist" Sister Souljah, said before and after the killing-white-people quote that Governor Clinton condemned, and that TV shows and newspapers and magazines, including this one, have reacted to ever since. I do not know exactly what she meant, although friends have paraphrased for me her explanation on the "Today" show. But I do know that the whole incident strikes an old, resonant chord in American racial relations. You can tell by the language we're using like blunt instruments, language that's trying to do many things at once. As always, black and white America are trying to make each other understand—to explain, score, dominate, manipulate, control, provoke, apologize and dis. [Editor's note: "dis" can mean dismiss or disdain.]

"Lousy language": that's what one male character called it in Anna Deavere Smith's one-woman show, "Fires in the Mirror," based on interviews with residents in a racially polarized Brooklyn neighborhood. We, to whom race is so important, he says, should have

more words for it; Eskimos have many words for snow. Conscious not only of what language people use but how they use it, Smith told Charlayne Hunter–Gault on "The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour" that people who had strong feelings about what Sister Souljah said should talk *to* her, not *about* her. Smith reminded viewers that Souljah is a young artist whose vision is "in process" and will be affected by the responses she receives.

With all the hoopla and the hype, we forget that. And very few of us know just how difficult it is to talk about race. We haven't learned how. There are no drills for it in school, like times tables, and rarely do we get beyond the most superficial discussion of vocabulary. Black, Negro, African–American, people of color. That's about as far as we get. If we don't stumble or lapse into silence, we talk past each other. Was the trouble in Los Angeles "a riot" or "an uprising"? Some of both, actually, but it takes a common language, perspective, even trust, to say that.

Because we know so little of our racial history together, we cannot recognize the clues that our language is giving us. We cannot hear in the go–slow rhetoric of racial conservatives the echo of one of the earliest abolitionists who believed "that an abhorrence of slavery would gradually work its way, and that it was the duty of the society patiently to wait the event." Without recognizing how very old are the counsels of patience, we are unable to hear how old, too, are the expressions of African–American frustration. On July 4, 1852, Frederick Douglass said this about finding language to touch white Americans: "At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would today pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder."

Ralph Wiley writes in his provocative book of essays, "Why Black People Tend to Shout" (1991): "When a sweet grandmotherly sort has to tell you how black people were once chained in iron masks in the canebrake, to keep them from eating the cane while they harvested it, and that these masks were like little ovens that cooked the skin off their faces—when you... realize she was once a girl who might have been your girl, and someone caused this pain on her lips and nobody did anything about it but keep living--this gives you a tendency to shout, especially when confronted by...a smarmy talk show host."

In vogue: There's also our American legacy of avoidance, chronicled by the scholar, editor and activist W.E.B. DuBois. "They say," he writes in "The Souls of Black Folk," "I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word."

Our history and our present have taught us that the language we use to talk about race can vary widely from our behavior. The word diversity, which is in vogue these days, ought to indicate wide variety but is often used by companies, schools and universities to mean two African–Americans in a group of 50 whites. There are all the code words, used principally by politicians to whip fear and ignorance into votes: Willie Horton, law and order, welfare cheats.

It's the language of stereotype, the American shorthand that keeps the discussion, and people, circumscribed. In the 1930s, Sterling Brown drew up seven categories of "Negro Character as Seen by White Authors," including The Contented Slave, The Brute Negro, The Tragic Mulatto, The Exotic Primitive. Cornel West, a professor at Princeton University, has said that because of stereotypes, black people "rarely get free of the fear of white gaze, the fear of black put–down, the fear of stepping out on their own... At the same time, there is a fear of failure, because your stereotypical image is that black people are always failing; there is also a fear that if you are successful you will be too alienated from black people, since you have failed to fall into a stereotype."

As my friend Marcyliena Morgan says, "Sometimes the whole situation makes you want to curl up in the corner and moan and groan and sing Negro spirituals." She says it, but, fact is, she's a linguist—a student of words. We need more of them, not less; more words, more students. I certainly do not want more talk of killing. What I do want is language: fighting words, love poems, elegance, dissonance, dissing, signifying, alarms, whistles, scholarly texts, political oratory, the works. Without it, we're dead.

Annotated Bibliography on Racism and Race Relations in America

This bibliography is selected primarily from recent works that reflect aspects of the current national dialogue. Videos and other bibliographies are listed as well.

America's Original Sin: A Study Guide on White Racism, 2nd edition. Published and distributed by *Sojourners*, 2401 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009, telephone: (202) 328–8842, FAX: (202) 328–8757.

This resource—designed for study, reflection, and action—looks at racism from historical, theological, economic, and personal perspectives. Provides a nine–session format along with suggestions for action, information about national organizations, and books and resources for further study.

Berry, Wendell. *The Hidden Wound*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989.

Personal recollections and considerations of the effects of racism on whites as members of the dominant race.

Bell, Derrick. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*. New York: BasicBooks, 1992.

Argues that "racism is so ingrained in American life that no matter what blacks do to better their lot, they are doomed to fail as long as the majority of whites do not see their own well–being threatened by the status quo."

Brooks, Roy L. *Rethinking the American Race Problem*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Argues that no meaningful talk about or work on the problems of African–Americans can take place without merging the question of race with that of class structure. Argues that self–help is the best hope for African–Americans.

Cole, Johnnetta B. *Conversations: Straight Talk with America's Sister President*. New York: Doubleday, 1993.

A series of essays addressing racism, sexism, Eurocentrism, and isolationism and offering common–sense approaches to the dilemmas they pose.

Democracy's Next Generation II: A Study of American Youth on Race. Washington, DC: People For the American Way, 1992. For price and ordering information, contact People For the American Way, 2000 M Street NW, Washington DC 20036, (202) 467–4999. Abridged version also available.

Examines racial attitudes among today's youth, and argues this is a crucial first step for breaking the cycle of blaming between whites and minorities.

Hacker, Andrew. *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1992.

An analysis of what keeps whites and blacks far apart. Argues that most liberals no longer make race a high priority. Argues

that both left and right share the pervasive misconception that blacks are inferior. Looks at the way issues of race affect the choices ordinary Americans make in their daily lives.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools.* New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991.

Describes what is happening to children from poor families in the inner cities and the less affluent suburbs. Argues that public schools in most of the U.S. remain segregated and unequal.

Lemann, Nicholas. "The Other Underclass." *Atlantic Monthly,* December 1991.

Examines Hispanic subgroups; demonstrates that Puerto Ricans are the worst-off ethnic group in the country. Looks at different theories that offer some explanation of why there is a Puerto Rican underclass.

Leone, Bruno. *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints.* San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1986.

Historical readings that demonstrate a variety of viewpoints as applied to questions of racism from the beginning of the U.S. to the present. Contains a section on the nature of racism.

McDougall, Harold A. *Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

A case study of the communities of black Baltimore which "provides an example of self-help and civic action that could...be occurring in other inner-city areas."

Melville, Keith. *Remedies for Racial Inequality: Why Progress Has Stalled, What Should Be Done.* Dayton, OH: National Issues Forums Institute, 1990. For price and ordering information, contact Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2460 Kerper Boulevard, Dubuque, IA 52004-0539, (800) 338-5578. Abridged version suitable for new readers also available.

One of many issue books prepared jointly by The Public Agenda Foundation and by the Kettering Foundation. Used in local discussion groups that are part of a nationwide network, the National Issues Forums (NIF). Groups interested in using the NIF materials and adapting its approach as part of their own program are invited to write or call for further information: National Issues Forums, 100 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2777. Phone (800) 433-7834. In Ohio, (800) 433-4819.

Orfield, Gary and Ashkinaze, Carole. *The Closing Door: Conservative Policy and Black Opportunity.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Analyzes and assesses "the effect of conservative policies on urban race and poverty in the 1980's" in Atlanta.

Pogrebin, Letty Cottin. "From Our Heads and Our Hearts: Connecting with Black Women." *Lilith,* Winter 1991.

Describes the genesis and progress of a black-Jewish women's dialogue group.

Race, Rage & Family: What Do We Tell the Children? A *Parenting* Magazine Special Report. *Parenting,* 301 Howard Street, 17th Floor. San Francisco, CA 94105.

Through interviews of families of different races, examines the question of how racial attitudes are formed.

Racism in America. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1991.

An anthology of readings examining various aspects of racism in America today. Chapters include: "Is Racism Responsible for Minority Poverty?," "Do Minorities Deserve Special Treatment?," and "How Can Racism Be Stopped?"

Sigelman, Lee and Welch, Susan. *Black Americans' Views of Racial Inequality: The Dream Deferred.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Most social science work on racial attitudes has focused on white attitudes; this remedies the gap by examining the attitudes, values, opinions, and behaviors of black Americans.

Steele, Claude M. "Race and the Schooling of Black Americans." *Atlantic Monthly,* April 1992.

A social psychologist, Steele makes an argument about the sometimes subtle messages minority students receive. Believes that stigma is connected to school achievement patterns for black Americans.

Steele, Shelby. *Content of our Character: A New Vision of Race in America.* New York: St. Martin Press, 1990.

Asserts that it is time for blacks to stop thinking of themselves as victims.

Rothenberg, Paula S., ed. *Racism and Sexism: An Integrated Study.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.

More than 70 interdisciplinary readings covering issues of importance to blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans. Topics include: legal status, consequences of inequality, stereotyping and language, how to move ahead.

Sowell, Thomas. *Markets and Minorities.* New York: Basic Books, 1981.

Analysis of the economic situation of America's racial and ethnic minorities. Offers an explanation of why government programs to improve the lot of minorities have failed, and argues that minorities can use the market to improve their economic condition.

Three Rivers, Amoja. *Cultural Etiquette: A Guide for the Well-Intentioned.* Indian Valley, VA: Market Wimmin. Available from Market Wimmin, Box 28, Indian Valley, VA 24105.

A brief, practical guide to countering the disinformation and ignorance that come with pervasive stereotypes that affect everyday language. Written "for those unlearning racism and anti-semitism."

Terkel, Studs. *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession.* New York: The New Press, 1992.

Interviews ordinary Americans; people talk candidly about how race affects their daily lives.

West, Cornel. *Race Matters.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Breaking away from traditional liberal and conservative views, West examines the question of race in a new framework. "First, we must admit that the most valuable sources for help, hope and power consist of ourselves and our common history . . . Second, we must focus our attention on the public square—the common good that undergirds our national and global destinies."

Williams, Juan, with the Eyes on the Prize Production Team. *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954–1965.* A companion volume to the PBS Television Series. New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1987.

A history of the civil rights movement as seen by the participants then and now. Time–line of the movement, readable stories, photos.

Videos

The Color of Your Skin. Cocoa Beach, FL: PBS Video, 1991. Produced by Hector Galan with correspondent David Maraniss for FRONTLINE. For information on purchasing the video, call PBS Video at (800) 424–7963. A copy of the transcript can be obtained from Journal Graphics, 1535 Grant Street, Denver, CO 80203.

Chronicles sessions of a multiracial group as they grapple with their feelings on racial issues. Participants are members of various branches of the armed services who are brought together for sixteen weeks at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.

Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years. Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 1986. WGBH Boston; a production of Blackside, Inc., and CPB, Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For information on purchasing the series, call PBS Video at (800) 424–7963. Starting Fall 1992, the series will be available in home video format.

History of the civil rights movement in America. Uses archival footage and interviews with participants in the movement. A book by the same title serves as a companion to this series.

Valuing Diversity.® San Francisco, CA: Griggs Productions, Inc.

A seven–part film/video series designed to help organizations (businesses, governmental agencies, and educational/non–profit institutions) deal with diversity. Each video/film deals with a different level of an organization, e.g., entry–level employees, supervisors, executives. "Diversity" includes cultural, racial, and ethnic variations, but also includes differences of gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Each title has a user's guide. For ordering and price information, contact Griggs Productions, Inc., 302 23rd Ave., San Francisco, CA 94121, telephone: (415) 668–4200, FAX: (415) 668–6004.

Other bibliographies

"History of Racism, Slavery and Resistance in the Americas: An Annotated Bibliography." Prepared by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. To order, contact WILPF, 1213 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107–1691, telephone: (215) 563–7110, FAX: (215) 864–2022. The bibliography is part of WILPF's 1992 Racial Justice Packet, available for $2.

Weinberg, Meyer, compiler. *Racism in the United States: A Comprehensive Classified Bibliography.* New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.

Includes a brief introduction on the concept of racism. 87 classifications, including: Economics of Racism; Effects on Children; Housing; Multiculturalism; Public Opinion; Institutional Racism; Theory of Racism; Stereotypes; Undoing Personal Racism; Violence Against Minorities.

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